

PUBLIC SUBMISSION

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Request for Information Regarding the Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008

Comment On: EBSA-2009-0010-0001

Request for Information Regarding the Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008

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General Comment

by email

Alan D. Lebowitz, Deputy Assistant Secretary
Office of Health Plan Standards and Compliance
Assistance, Employee Benefits Security Administration
Room N-5653
U.S. Department of Labor
200 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20210

Attention: MHPAEA Comments

Dear Mr. Lebowitz,

From 1980 to 1992, I was honored to represent the 103rd Legislative District which includes our state's capital in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives.

In the early 1980's, I took on and led the fight to require all group health plans and HMOs to provide treatment for alcohol and other drug addiction.

My law was enacted in 1986 and re-authorized in 1989 with strong bi-partisan

support. Since then, every year literally thousands of Pennsylvanians receive life-saving treatment for this illness through the Pennsylvania law.

This law and its treatment provisions are important to the 1 in 4 families in our state struggling to help an addicted love one.

For this reason, I was alarmed by the initial debate over the Federal Parity law and was astounded to find that key consumer protections of Pennsylvania's law were in danger of being pre-empted by the Federal legislation.

This was deeply upsetting to me. I repeatedly contacted Pennsylvania's delegation to Congress pleading for protection of Pennsylvania's state drug and alcohol addiction treatment law and encouraged others to do the same.

Much to my relief, after extensive Congressional debate on this issue, the parity legislation as finally enacted preserves more favorable state laws.

I am writing to you now to alert you to the importance of this issue and to urge you to ensure that any regulations prepared do nothing to undermine Congress' clear decision to preserve more favorable state laws.

Sincerely,

Peter C. Wambach
Former Pennsylvania State Representative
1980-1992 103rd Legislative District